DIVINE GRACE

EXEMPLIFIED;

IN THE

LIFE,

CONVERSION,

AND

Religious Experience

OF

SAMUEL PICKERING.

IN WHICH IS GIVEN,

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE WORK OF GOD

IN

Different Regiments.

Thou therefore endure hardness as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ.---Paul.

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PREFACE.

I am very conscious of the difficulty which attends being one's own Biographer; because in the life of any person there must be a very many circumstances which would appear much better from a more indifferent pen, which; nevertheless, are needful to be related.

Again, it must be rather a painful task to relate a very many incidents in a person's own history, which an honest mind cannot pass over; although they should expose him to public censure.

Nevertheless, at a period like the present, when infidelity is making such rapid strides amongst us, it certainly is the bounden duty of every real friend to the Religion of Jesus, to step forward, and "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," at once to refute all the purile arguments of our adversaries by a testimony which they cannot withstand, (viz.) the workings of Divine Grace upon the human heart.

I, therefore, who am "less than the least of all saints" influenced, I trust, by the best of motives, as well as urged by the repeated importunity of friends, desire, in the most profound humility, to magnify the unsearchable riches of Christ, in publishing to the world, how miraculously the God of all mercy, hath "plucked me as a brand from the burning," "brought my feet out of the miry clay, and set me in a large place." But, if it be indeed a truth, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned; then I may expect to be branded with the odious epithets of enthusiast, fanatic and the like, be it however as it may, if I can but be instrumental of the least good to any of my poor fellow mortals, my end is abundantly answered, and I desire to give God alone all the glory.—Amen.

Macclesfield, March 25, 1800.

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DIVINE GRACE

EXEMPLIFIED, ETC.

I was born, October 10, 1770, in the Parish of Wilmslow, near Macclesfield, in Cheshire, of poor, but industrious parents, who gave me as good an education as their circumstances would admit of, which was to read my Bible, Write, and Cast Accounts.

At a very early period of my life, it pleased the Lord to make divine impressions on my mind, which alas! I trifled away. In my eleventh year I was put apprentice to a Tailor; but being of a restless disposition, in the course of my Apprentiship, I had no less than four Masters, and during this time, I unhappily contracted a variety of evil habits, in particular that most abominable one of drunkenness, which often proves an inlet to many others; it was unfortunately my case, by falling into company with men who ridiculed the holy scriptures, the little traces of Religion I had, soon wore away, and I abandoned myself to wickedness. It might have been better had I troubled no one but myself; but at a very early age I was Married, and soon became instrumental in the unhappiness of a tender and affectionate wife.

Business seemed to answer well for me, but I could not be at rest: so true are those words of the Prophet! "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked." The Lord gave me a family which might have been a blessing to me; but alas! it proved otherwise; for the money, which ought to have made them comfortable, was squandered away in the public house.

Home soon became burthensome to me, and my guilty conscience became my accuser; but where could I fly for help? for I had now given up my Bible.

I therefore determined to stifle conscience by having recourse to liquor, and forming an ungodly connection with characters like myself, I was resolved to steel myself against every thing that was sacred; often making a mock of the people of God, and sometimes imitating their preachers, to please my ungodly companions; which were now become so numerous that I had little time to follow my employment, which of course involved me in debt; and while the world was calling me a good hearty fellow, I was making my damnation sure. Reader, whoever thou art, especially if thou art young, let me entreat thee, to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth; avoid that rock on which thousands have split, who whilest they are seeking to please their ungodly companions, are offending God, the rock of all their mercies, whilst the honor which cometh of men will one day be as wormwood, and gall to their souls; this was truly my case; for although I endeavoured to

work my mind into a state of stupidity, yet I had my thinking moments; my merry nights often produced sad mornings; when the following reflections would often arouse my guilty conscience: "Is there a possibility of my having deceived myself? Is it really true, that God will punish the wicked? Is there such a place as Hell? If indeed these things are so, then woe is me! for I am undone!" Certain portions of scripture would often be applied to my mind, such as "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world," "as the tree falls, so it must lie &c." At these awful and awakening seasons, in spite of all my unbelief, fear would arise, and oftentimes in the horror of my mind, I have been tempted to lay violent hands on myself, and so terminate my miserable existance. All this while I endeavoured to hide my disquietude, and none besides God and myself, knew what I suffered: when I beheld an affectionate wife, with two small children, and considered my profligate life; I was ready to curse the day that ever I was born. How thankful ought I to be to Almighty God, that he did not give me up entirely to the hardness of my heart! he might justly have done it; but instead of this he still strove with me, yea again and again, was I excited to that which was good; but as often did I refuse to listen to Divine Grace and Mercy. O how long-suffering is our God! who willeth not the death of him that dieth!

I had now been Married nearly three years, and was only in the twentieth year of my age; yet my circum-

stances were in the most embarrassed state, my health considerably impaired, and every rescourse nearly exhausted; which way to turn myself I knew not, it was in vain to attempt to drown my anguish and distress in liquor, and all the tender remonstrances of friends were thrown away upon me; O the pain! the excruciating tortures of my mind! none excepting those who have been in like circumstances, can form the most distant idea of my distress.

One morning, having been much intoxicated over night, I formed the desperate rolosution of enlisting as a soldier, but what tongue can express the horror of my mind, when I came down stairs, and saw my wife with my infant, not many weeks old, upon her knee? O what heart-piercing reflections did her tears occasion me! whilest another fine boy was crying out to me "Daddy! Daddy! do not get drunk any more!" My heart was ready to burst; but little did my distressed and abused wife think what I was about to do! however I sumed up all my hellish courage, and calmly went to take leave of some of my acquaintance, and set out to Stockport; but before I got there, the thoughts of forever leaving home, family, and friends, a little staggered my resolution, and for a while I resolved to return home; but drink and company, my darling besetments, led me to a public house, where I soon stiffled my tenderest feelings, and engaged in a regiment of horse; but a person being present who knew me, by some means got me from them, and proposed my enlisting into the

Derbyshire Militia; I eagerly embraced the opportunity: being prepared for any thing which promised money or drink.

The same night I wrote to my wife, informing her of what I had done, and biding her with my children farewell! being much intoxicated I was gotten to bed; but I want words to express what were my painful sensations the following morning: when, with the most bitter reflections against myself, I exclaimed, "Oh wretch that I am! what have I done? how cruelly have I treated the best of wives! in what a forlorn, wretched, miserable condition have I left her, and my innocent offspring! what painful forebodings! what excruciating tortures must tear her miserable breast when she received intelligence of my madness—my cruel letter! But Oh for myself! what will become of me? why did I not enlist into some regiment, whose duty would soon have called them to the field—the wretched seat of carnage and bloodshed—where the vengeful ball of the enemy might have spent its force upon my guilty head, and so have rid the earth of a burthen, under which it hath already too long groaned—my wretched self!" Such truly where my feelings, such my horrid reflections, when my bedfellow awoke, and with marks of cheerfulness, asked me how I did? I recollected his voice, and looking him in the face, I remembered that some years back we had been intimately acquainted, when I was an apprentice with Mr. Calrow, of Mottram, when he, with his father were employ-

ed as house-carpenters by Mr. Wright, of the same place: he informed me that the over night he had found me in some very abusive company, that he had gotten me away from them, and come with me to bed; he also gave me to understand that we belonged to one and the same regiment, and expressed his pleasure that we were likely to be companions once more &c.

As he was about to leave the town that day, I desired the Sergeant to permit me to go along with him: as I wished to be out of the noise and uneasiness which I knew my enlisting would occasion. Accordingly we went on to Macclesfield; but my parents residing in this town, I desired to be quartered as far from them as possible, which request also was granted.

I soon became intoxicated again, to drown my rising disquietude, and after some time fell asleep; but was soon awaked by my mother, who, having heard of what I had done, was come to seek me, she informed me that my wife was in town, and that my father was gone to Stockport, if possible to get me liberated; but in spite of all their tears and entreaties, I would not give my consent to it: however they got me to bed at my father's house, where ten thousand horrors seized me, and "darkness, yea darkness that might be felt" surrounded me. Sleep I could not, the distress I had seen my poor injured wife and friends in, caused my conscience to condemn me, and in spite of my infidelity "Hell, with all its long black

train of fiery judgments seemed moved from beneath to meet me at my coming." I was tempted many times during the night to blaspheme God; I called upon him, if he had any power to let fall the uplifted arm of divine vengance, and at once to end my wretched existance. Oh my God! had not thy name been "the Lord, the Lord merciful, and gracious" I had now been lifting up my eyes in torments, far, far beyond the reach of mercy! but thou art goodness itself, therefore shall my soul praise thee, yea let the inextinguishable flames of love and gratitude, for ever burn upon the mean altar of my heart, for thy boundless mercy to me the chief of sinners.

Who even dared a righteous God,
To strike the fatal blow.

Several times, during the night, I attempted to get out of the house by stealth, but could not find any opportunity, as by the sighing, and restlessness of my friends, I believed them to be awake. At length the long wished-for day-light appeared, and with all the fortitude of which I was master, I took my leave of my friends, and in company with many more went forward to Leek in Staffordshire, and now, in order to hide my distress of mind, I began to affect my usual cheerfulness. In a few days we got to Derby, where by forming new connections, drinking and gaming my time was taken up for a while.

About this time, it pleased the Lord so to order it, that if I had pleased, I might have been in a

measure comfortable and happy: I was received as a Tailor to work for the Regiment, both for some Officers and Private men, which, together with my pay as a soldier, made my income very considerable; but alas! all the money I could earn was little enough to support my extravagance; however my days and nights past carelessly away untill my sorrow again returned by the sight of my aged father, who had come near forty miles to take leave of a disobedient son who had robbed him of peace, and caused his days to hang heavily upon his hands; he stopped with me a day or two, and then left me to return home.

We now left Derby, and proceeded on our march for the Norfolk coast, my time did not seem so tedious; as I had now an opportunity of satisfying my rambling disposition. We passed through a many large towns, and halted at Cambridge, I visited the Chapels and Colleges there, and fell into company with some who treated me very kindly. We proceeded from thence to Newmarket, and as it was the Spring Meeting for the races I was pleased for a moment again. The company to which I belonged was stationed at Brandon, at the extremities of the two counties Norfolk and Suffolk, near eighteen miles beyond Newmarket, where I met with good quarters, and the Officers of my company treated me very kindly.

Whilst I remained in this town, a circumstance of rather a singular nature happened. As I was one morning walking along side the river, I met an aged woman, who the moment she beheld me, stopped

and stood motionless for some time, when at length she lifted her hands and eyes towards heaven, and whilst the tears streamed down her aged cheeks, she intreated God to have mercy upon me, and to convert my soul; I was inclined to laugh at first; but believing from her appearance that she was sincere, I endeavoured to refrain, when she exclaimed "O Sir! God will one day make choice of you to preach the gospel." Several persons who were fishing at the river, drew nigh unto us; some of whom I knew, and, in an ironical manner, told them I was to be a Methodist Preacher, and for the future I desired they would consider me as such; the woman left us seeing my treatment: I heard afterwards that she had seen me in a dream, and heard me preach, and that she was then coming to my quarters to speak with me, for she had informed her friends, that she could take no rest, untill she had so done. Strange as this may seem, she hath since heard me preach, and related unto me the particulars of her dream. Not long after this I dreamed, that being discharged from the Regiment, I was returned to the place of my nativity, and enjoyed such peace of mind, which for many years past I had been a stranger to; that I was become a preacher, was dressed in black, and that I met a certain person in the town, with whom I conversed respecting the state of his soul. In about four years afterwards my dream was fulfilled in every part, both with respect to the person, and the particulars of our con-

versation—O Lord! Thou knowest all things, "God speaketh once, yea twice, by dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man," however, as I always wish to put as little confidence as possible in dreams, I leave this, as well as the former, to the candid judgment of the unprejudiced, and bless the Lord that "we have a more sure word of prophecy," even the scriptures of truth.

We lay in this town untill the month of June; when our rout come for Walley camp, in the county of Essex; some respectable people, with whom I had been some time acquainted, behaved very kindly to me at my departure: I had a large box, which they insisted should be filled with whatever I thought would make me comfortable at camp: indeed my conduct had been more moral than it had been for many years before. When we got to camp, I found myself very unhappy again; I could not bear the thoughts of sleeping upon straw; however I reconciled myself to my situation as much as possible; but through hard drinking, and the inconveniences of camp, my health was much impaired, and was obliged, in spite of all my vain courage, to yield to the hand of God, and was carried to the hospital. I had not been here long, before one who, went from Macclesfield with me, died, and now my fears were truly alarmed, I endeavoured to pray, but unbelief stopped my mouth; my past conduct accused me, and my strength failed. I now abandoned myself to dispair, carefully concealing my distress, I expected soon to know the worst; at

this time I did not find the least desire to believe the Scriptures, for I thought if *they* be true; *I* am eternally undone! it is impossible that God, if there really is such a being, can have mercy upon me. I wandered into a neighbouring wood, and casting myself upon the ground, bemoaned my wretched condition.

After some time, my health in some measure returned; but instead of being grateful for it, I got amongst my old companions again.

Many times during this campaign, I was on the brink of death, through excess of drinking. It was very late in the year when our rout came for Bedford and St. Neots, whilst we lay in these towns I was, if possible worse than ever, whilst I lay at St. Neots, Richard Crossby, and Samuel Rhodes, two of my old companions, were executed for highway robbery. And as their conversion and experience, whilst prisoners in Bedford gaol, may not be foreign to the original intentions of this little narrative, suffer me here to give the reader some account of them from the Arminian Magazine for 1795.

"Richard Crossby had been a notorious offender; at a very early period he lost the preventing Grace of God, and habituated himself to wickedness; the propensity of his heart was towards evil continually, and he himself acknowledged, that all the powers of his soul were totally depraved; he even could not recollect that he ever had the fear of God before his eyes. At twelve years of age, when he was a waiting boy

at a gentleman's house at East Redford, in Nottinghamshire, he robbed his fellow servant of half a guinea. He afterwards returned home to his father's (a miller) at Sturton near Retford, and lived with him some years, during which time he was in the habit of robbing his father at all convenient opportunities, when selling flour. At the age of 17, he heard the Methodist preachers; the Word reached his heart and in some degree awakened his conscience; he formed resolutions to serve God and live a new life. Happy, indeed, would it have been for him, and many others, if he had been faithful to the admonitions and impressions made upon his mind by the illuminating Spirit of Truth at that time; ten thousand torments of conscience he would have escaped, and a life of wretchedness, and an infamous, premature death, would have been prevented. This was an important crisis, Life and Death, Heaven and Hell, were set before him, and he had his choice; but he made an unhappy one; he preferred evil company, before those who were serious and pious; "God called me (to use his "own expression) but I *would* not come!" This wilful perverseness and rejection of the goodness and mercy of God, was soon followed by a judicial hardness and darkness of mind, so that he was given up to be led by the devil to the commission of a thousand villanies. It would be shocking and painful to the pious Reader, to recite all the crimes he confessed himself to have been guilty of: They were works of darkness, and must all be brought to light by a just

scrutinizing Judge, at the proper Day; happy will it be for the criminal, if he can plead a full and free pardon for all his sins, through Faith in the great atoning Sacrifice!

In 1784, Crossby received sentence of Death at York, and was left by the Judge for execution, for setting fire to a neighbour's mill, near Selby, which he apprehended would hurt his business. But before the day of execution, Crossby and another felon broke out of York Castle, and effected their escape. In 1786, Crossby was under sentence of Death a second time, for breaking open a house at Market-Dereham, in Norfolk, but was reprieved for transportation. After being confined four months at Woolwich, he again made his escape. The last atrocious crime he was guilty of, was robbing Mr. Emery Palmer, of Goldington, near Bedford. Crossby was assisted in the commission of this robbery, by Samuel Rhodes and John Rhodes. It was a happy circumstance for the Public, and even for the robbers, that Mr. Palmer exerted himself in apprehending and bringing them to justice, as it not only prevented future depredations on their fellow creatures, but, we hope, was the means of bringing them to repentance.

"The first time I had an opportunity of seeing and conversing with Richard Crossby and Samuel Rhodes, was in the County Jail at Bedford, Feb. 7, 1794, Mr. Fenwick preached to the prisoners, and after sermon, requested that I would pray with them. During the time of prayer I was uncommonly affected,

and felt the most fervent desires for the salvation of their precious souls. When we rose from our knees, I went up to the prisoners, and with weeping eyes, intreated them, for the Lord's sake, to consider their latter end! Crossby gave attention to what was spoken, which encouraged me to visit them almost every day during that week. I soon perceived that Crossby was sensible of his miserable condition, he expected Death would be the just punishment of his crimes, and that he was entirely unprepared to meet it. When I mentioned to him the willingness of God to have compassion upon the vilest of sinners, if they would repent, he answered, "But I have been called "so many times, that now I think God will not have "mercy upon such a wretch as I am." Samuel Rhodes would seldom speak; he seemed to be under no concern about Death or Judgment.

Feb. 11. I preached to the prisoners with much freedom. Crossby acknowledged that he saw and felt himself more wretched than ever. I continued my visits till the 19th, and then took leave of them for a fortnight, being obliged to attend my circuit. In the interim, the Rev. Mr. D. preached to the prisoners, and the word was greatest blessed to Crossby, who now began to entertain some hopes that the Lord would have mercy upon him, and forgive his great and heinous sins. On the 7th of March, when the Judge came into Bedford, Samuel Rhodes wept very much, and was greatly alarmed, being ap-

prehensive that he should be cast. Next day the felons were brought to trial; Crossby pleaded *guilty*, and when the Judge said to him, "You may, perhaps, "think you will have mercy shewn you, by pleading "guilty;" Crossby replied, "No, my lord: I "am guilty, and I ought to suffer: but if you will "spare my life, I shall be thankful." The two Rhodes's pleaded, not guilty. They were all three convicted, and received sentence of death. John Rhodes was reprieved before the Judge left the town, on account of his being at a little distance when the robbery was committed; but Samuel Rhodes and Crossby were left for execution. The former of these men was in a most terrible agony of mind after his sentence; but Crossby recovered so much hope of obtaining mercy from his Supreme Judge, whom he had sought with deep contrition and humiliation of soul, that he was enabled to pray publicly among the felons and spectators, immediately after he retired from the bar, to their great astonishment.

On Monday, I found Crossby crying for mercy, and Rhodes sinking into despair under a sense of his sins. I reminded them that as their time was short, they had not a moment to lose; but if they sincerely repented and returned to the Lord, He would in no wise cast them out. On Tuesday the poor malefactors were in greater distress than I ever saw them. During the time of preaching, Rhodes was so affected that he trembled as if he had been standing at the Bar of the great Judge of Heaven and Earth. On Wednes-

day, Crossby said, " I find such love to Christ, that " I know he will save me." Rhodes cried out, " O " what a wretched sinner I have been!" He appeared to be in a most dreadful agony;—upon asking him, Why he trembled in that manner? he replied, " It is " the terror I feel upon my mind!" The Jailer and prisoners remarked, with some degree of astonishment, that Crossby and Rhodes were either praying, reading, or singing Psalms and Hymns, all the day through, from morning to night.

On Thursday, Rhodes found a degree of hope springing up in his soul, that notwithstanding he was a great sinner, yet the Lord would help him to repent. Crossby was not so comfortable as on the preceding day; the enemy assaulted him with sore temptations. On Friday they were both of them more in earnest to find the Lord. Crossby said, " I am determined to give myself to God." All this time they had not only a clear discovery of the guilt and curse due to their sins, but likewise they felt their own helplessness and insufficiency, and often cried out in their prayers, " Without thee, we can do nothing." On Saturday, Crossby said, " I have no fear of " Death." I asked, Why do you not fear Death? He replied, " The burden I felt is all gone; and I " feel such love to Christ, that I know I shall be " saved."

Sunday 16. We found Rhodes happy. Crossby often said, " God bless you! How we shall rejoice to " see you in Heaven! and how glad we shall be to see

" all our instructors in Glory!" The Spirit of prayer powerfully rested upon them, and I was greatly refreshed while in their company. They went twice, this day, to the church, and were much blessed. On Monday, Rhodes said, " What a wicked sinner I " have been! The devil has almost led me to hell! " Yet I think the Lord will save me; I hope he will; " I know he will." They often expressed the greatest compunction for the crimes they had been guilty of, and prayed most fervently for those they had injured, saying, " Lord, bless those whom we " have wronged; we cannot make them a recom- " pence, but do thou shower down thy grace upon " them." Crossby exclaimed, " My friends I have " robbed of quietness; my neighbours of their pro- " perty; and God I have robbed of the precious time " he gave me, and of the talents he intrusted me " with!"

Tuesday, I preached to the prisoners; after the sermon the condemned criminals went to prayer: Rhodes cried out, " O how happy I am! O Lord, " how I long for thy salvation! There will be no " head-ach, no weeping eyes, no suffering there! " This is the happiest day I ever knew." On Wed- " nesday I had a long conversation with Crossby, in which he related, with godly sorrow, the particulars of his fomer sinful life. On Thursday and Friday both the malefactors continued to increase in the knowledge and love of God.

Saturday 22, the day of execution. I went to the prison soon after six o'clock in the morning. When Rhodes came into the Yard, he began to praise and bless the Lord for his astonishing mercy and love, saying, "O what a pleasant morning! This is the "best I ever knew." About eleven, their irons were knocked off, and they took leave of their fellow-prisoners, which was a most affecting scene. We then entered the cart, and began singing the Penetential Psalm, "O Thou that hear'st when sinners cry!" When we were about half-way to the place of execution, I said to them, Now you are within a few minutes of etering into Eternity, how od you find the state of your souls? Crossby replied, "I "do not fear Death;—I cannot doubt;—I feel such "love to Christ, that I know he will save me."

Upon our arrival at the fatal tree, the Rev. Mr. Abbot read the usual service, which when concluded, both the criminals went to prayer. When Crossby had prayed for himself and his companion in condemnation, he then supplicated the divine mercy upon his parents, brothers, and sisters, and was particularly fervent for all those he had wronged, saying, "O Lord, bless them; I have greatly injured them, "and it is out of my power to make them any sa-"tisfaction; but do thou give them thy favour and "blessing." He then besought the divine goodness upon those who had visited them to prison; and lastly, that all the spectators might take warning by their infamous and untimely death, to shun the paths

of wickedness. Some of his last words were, "Lord JESUS, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Rhodes, in his prayer, among the many pathetic and striking expressions said, "Death is nothing "to us;—the Lord will give us the victory! O "how happy I am! I never was so happy in all my "life." His grateful heart overflowed with thankfulness for the exemplary kindness and humanity they had received from the jailer, saying, "O Lord, bless "that good gentleman, Mr. Howard; for whenever "any came to speak to us about our souls, he was "always willing to admit them to see us: Shower "down thy blessing upon his posterity."

When prayer was concluded, Crossby said, "I "have many times forfeited my life; but I am going "to suffer for robbing Mr. Palmer. I acknowledge "the fact, and I ought to suffer. I have been informed that he is a worthy gentleman, and am very "sorry for the injury I have done him. I have no "person to blame. It was my wicked covetous disposition, that led me on to do what I have done. "I die in peace. I forgive all who have spoken "against me, and I hope all will forgive me." Rhodes then said, "I never saw a man robbed in "my life before; but I ought to suffer, not only "temporal, but eternal Death. Nevertheless I am "not afraid of Death. This is the happiest hour "I ever knew in my life; I hope in a few minutes "we shall be in Paradise."

When they had done speaking, I took my leave of them, and the ropes were put about their necks. I suppose they were dead in about four minutes.

Bedford, March 22, 1794. } JOHN HICKLING.

Part of Richard Crossby's Letter to his Friends, written the day before his Execution.

"I intreat you to consider how the matter stands between God and your souls, that you may become acquainted with your fallen state, and the dangerous situation you are in, while going on in the way of destruction that undoubtedly leads to Hell. For you know I have been the most abandoned wicked wretch that ever lived upon the face of the Earth; and if we do not leave our wickedness and turn to God, we shall be undone for ever. O what a dreadful thing it will be, to die without God, and his salvation! I can now inform you, that I am in the happiest situation I ever knew in my life; although I do not expect to live above twenty-one hours; but the Love of the Lamb of God is so much in my mind, that it enables me to meet Death with comfort; blessed be the holy Lamb of God for ever, who came down from Heaven to die for us. Weep not

for me, for dying to me is gain, but weep for your sins. I beg of Almighty God, that when you read these lines, he would be pleased so to work upon your hearts, that you may never rest day or night, till you have found Christ to be yours; and then you will be happy; for out of Christ there is no rest; this I have proved to be too true; for in all my wickedness I never found any happiness or satisfaction, but on the contrary, torment. That gracious God who made us, has also given us all things necessary, and yet what ungrateful wretches we have been, to labour so hard in serving the devil, when we know that his wages are eternal Death! Remember, we must all of us give an account of the deeds done in the body, but is it possible to give a good account, if we continue in sin? Whatever you do, be sure to serve God, and walk in his ways.

My desire is so much for Christ, and in Christ, for the great things he hath done for me, that I could always be talking of him and praying to him, and g'orifying him for ever. O what he suffered for us, when he hung upon the Cross, while the streaming Blood issued from his hands and feet! And yet notwithstanding his astonishing Love, we have gone and served his foe, the devil! O how this has grieved his Holy Spirit; and this I have done very much, and very long; I speak it to my shame, but I must speak the truth. I feel such love for your souls, that I know not how to leave off writing. O what a

dreadful thing it would have been to have lost my soul for ever! for I had but about seven weeks to live after I was awakened; and if I had been snatched away out of the world without the fear of God, I should have been miserable to all Eternity; but now you may thank the Lord that he has called me to repentance by his heavenly Grace. I must now take leave of all the World; so my dear father and mother, brothers and sisters, adieu! farewell! May the Almighty and Merciful God be with you all, is the prayer of your dying Son,

Bedford Gaol,
March 21, 1794.

R. CROSSBY.

I bless the Lord that this awful catastrophe had a good effect upon me; and I resolved for the future to keep better company; but alas! my resolutions soon wore away: for when I got into the public-house again, and being seated among my old companions, every thing of a serious nature was soon done away; but before we removed from this town, the Lord strove with me in a very powerful manner:—Having heard a Baptist Minister preach one Sunday evening, I could take no rest all night: hell appeared to me an awful reality, and in spite of all my infidelity, my heart condemned me before

God:—How well it would have been, had I then obeyed the call.—I am now constrained to bless God that he did not at that time enter into judgment with me.

☞ A LETTER which I received about this time from my friends, in which I was informed of their unhappiness concerning me, together with their prayers for my eternal welfare, was made a mean of conviction to me; but though they did not at that time see their prayers answered, yet the Lord was not unmindful of them; for I have reason to believe, that God, in answer to their cries, through the Blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, hath made me truly sensible of my folly, brought me safe home again, and placed me in the midst of those whose kindness to me I hope will never be forgotten. May God reward them for their kindness to unworthy me.

The summer following, we were again removed to Walley Camp, and my infidel principles were now so deeply rooted, that I scarce ever thought of death, or judgment, and I gave myself up to work iniquity with greediness.

Our campaign being ended; we went to quarters in Hereford, and the neighbouring villages; were through excessive drinking, and the distress of my-

mind, I lost the right use of my reason; but being in some measure restored, I got leave to go on furlow to see my friends; but they had alas little satisfaction of my company, as I was so extreamly miserable, except when at the public house. I soon returned to the regiment where I spent my time as usual, and in a few weeks our rout came for Seven Oaks, in Kent, and from thence to Eastburn in Sussex: here we got liquor very cheap, which many times had nearly terminated my miserable existance.

From hence we removed to Rye, in the same county; our barrack room here adjoined to the church, and was not far from the Methodist chapel. Prompted by a wicked, and rakish curiosity I one evening went to preaching, when the Lord, by the mouth of Mr. Bartholomew, was pleased ro touch my poor heart in a most powerful manner, to alarm my guilty fears, and to place death, hell, and the grave awfully before my eyes; but alas the public house once more proved my "miserable comforter," so true it is that "the carnal mind is enmity against God:" for although the Lord mercifully "waited to be gracious" unto me; yet would I not "yield to be saved."

From hence we removed to the city of Canterbury; and now to stifle my convictions, I gave a perfect loose to all my desires, and kept the worst company I could find.

From Canterbury, we removed to Blachington barracks, near Seaford, in the county of Sussex: here I laboured hard to ruin the little remaining health that

was left; little did I think of ever surviving to embrace the gospel; sometimes I was quite deranged in my intellects, and at other times in a state of perfect insensibility through liquor; I had just received a deal of money for work, in spending of which, I nearly put a period to my existance, and was terribly alarmed one morning, when the Doctor told me he believed I had not many hours to live; I now endeavoured to pray, but could not, pain and anxiety were painted in my countenance; and to believe in Christ for salvation I found impossible, nor did I believe any thing that were related to him; however Divine Mercy interfered, and I recovered a little from my indisposition of body; but my mind, seemed incurable. At length, through the entreaties of one or two persons, whom I had formerly persecuted, I went to hear an old man preach, I prayed as well as my unbelief would admit of, that if there was in religion any reality I might experience it in my own soul. He preached from those alarming words of the angel to lot "Escape for thy life! look not behind thee! tarry not in all the pain! escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!" Whilst he preached my knees smote together, my heart and my flesh failed, and I felt what I never felt before. As private as possible I retired to the barrack room, fell upon the ground, and as it were "out of the belly of hell," I cried, "Lord save or I perish!" As soon as I was in any measure, capable of recollection I found two persons near me,

who, although they had some idea of religion, verily believed I was out of my senses, and with some difficulty got me to my hammock. I durst not sleep, I was in such dreadful apprehensions of awaking in hell, the Divine Law roared against me, and threatened my speedy destruction, black dispair laid hold upon me, guilt and misery overwhelmed me, and the gates of hell seemed opened to receive me; I "roared aloud for the disquietude of my soul," and it was speedily rumoured up and down, that the Methodists had driven me besides myself. I went to see a person who had been very kind to me, and the moment he saw me, he began to swear, asking me if I wanted any more money, telling me that I had many pounds not long before; but I answered no sir, but am come to warn you to flee from the wrath to come; he replied "so you have done it now Pickering! what you were not able to accomplish by drinking, the Methodists have done for you," however I regarded him not, the smiles or the frowns of men were now become indifferent to me. I wandered into the fields; but my poor mind was in a strange convulsed state; notwithstanding I was many yards from the sea side, and flat upon the ground, I held myself by the grass lest I should fall in, so strong were my fears! but blessed be God before I rose from the ground, I was enabled to exercise a little faith in the Blood and Righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I continued to pray with all my might, that God would have mercy upon me; but by ceasing to drink,

which for a long time had been my chief support, I grew exceedingly weak. One night as I lay on my hammock, it was suggested to my mind "thou art lost, beyond hope of recovery;" when in the agony of my soul I cried out "Lord save, or I perish!" And in a moment faith sprung up in my soul, my guilt and condemnation was all gone, and I was filled with peace and joy in believing; I could say with the Apostle, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" but when I thought hath God indeed, forgiven all my sins? I was so overwhelmed with gratitude, that I cried aloud and praised God in the Barrack room. The following scriptures were powerfully applied to my mind, namely, "A Dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me, and woe is me! If I preach not the Gospel," "Go ye out into all the earth and preach the Gospel to every creature," &c. &c. I reasoned with the Lord on account of my inability, and unworthiness, and it was answered "Go, for behold I am with thee." I prayed, if it must be so, that it might be at some future period. Leaving myself to God I arose in the morning, and was happy all the day, warning, beseeching, and exhorting all I conversed with, to forsake their sins, and turn to God. In the evening I went again to hear preaching, and after sermon I prayed, when God, in a wonderful manner, poured out his spirit upon us, the preacher, and several of the people, said I was called to preach the Gospel, and entreated me not to

disobey the call; I told them I was very unfit, and had not read my Bible of many years; they said, God would be wisdom in my foolishness, and assist me. That night I entered into a solemn covenant with God, and he gave me power over my besetments, so that I bless his holy name, I have never since had any desire of returning "with the dog to his vomit" or "with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Urged by a strong desire for the salvation of my fellow mortals, on the 17th of June, 1796, (eleven days after my conversion) with much fear and trembling, I ventured to yield to the earnest solicitations of my religious acquaintance, and preached to a numerous congregation, when God in a wonderful manner assisted me, and gave me a word in season to many, whose guilty fears were alarmed, who in the depth of their misery cried to God, when he heard them, and pardoned all their sins; some of these are unhappily turned into the world again, others remain to this day living witnesses of the Lord's power to save, and others are gone to their reward.

My trials, which I thought were now all gone for ever, seemed as if they were but just beginning: the man whom God had made instrumental of good to me, turned against me, said I was drinking into the spirit of the Wesley's and should go to hell along with them; nevertheless I continued to preach, sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another, and the Lord was pleased to bless my feeble labours.

In a short time, we removed from this place to Langley Fort, and having had many unprofitable disputes with Ministers of different denominations, who all agreed that I was a rank Arminian; I earnestly desired that I might see some one of the Arminian Preachers; and I have reason to believe that the Lord heard my prayer, for one morning as I lay in my hammock, one of my brethren, who was in society with me, came and told me that a man in black wanted to see me: I immediately replied, he was a Methodist Preacher, and so I found. His name was Mr. Anderson, one of their Travelling Preachers, who having heard of a many praying soldiers in the Barracks had ridden many miles to see and pray with us. He exhorted us to go on in the name and strength of the Lord, and it was with much reluctance we parted from each other.

I gathered strength in my soul, every day and in a short time the Lord inclined the heart of one who had persecuted me much to give me leave to go to Rye, where I saw Mr. Bartholomew again, whose kind treatment I shall not soon forget, and his friendly instructions were made of singular use to me. The friends bore with my weaknesses, kindly corrected my errors, and encouraged me to go forward. After having spoken to them in public a few times, I returned to my regiment, and proclaimed the name of the Lord wherever I found an opportunity—sometimes under the rocks, by the sea side, at other times by the side of the encampment, and often by the light

of the moon, in various places did the Lord graciously own his word; both soldiers, and the inhabitants of the place attended, and some stout hearted smugglers who came to persecute, because, they said, I had learned their wives to pray, were constrained to own that the word of the Lord is true and righteous altogether.

One evening one of these characters came swearing that although, he had no great liking for their parson; yet he would oblige him for once, by putting a final stop to my preaching; he had under his coat a great club, and stood before me with his hat on, while I was endeavouring to excite the people to "Prepare to meet their God."

I observed him, and it was impressed upon my mind to speak to him. "Friend, said I, will you stand with your hat on at the awful tribunal of God? O prepare to meet your God!" When he dropped his club, pulled his hat off, and kneeled down supplicating God to have mercy on his soul, when the Lord heard, and answered, and gave him the desire of his heart.

The officers of my regiment now began to rage against me, took my work from me, and used me very cruelly in a many respects; declaring they would put an end to my preaching; often times during preaching, they attempted to pull me down; when the town's people would interfere in my behalf, and prevent them; at other times when the inhabitants, who were chiefly smugglers, would have molested me, the soldiers would take my part: so true it is, that

" God hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them as he turneth the rivers of the south." The Lord graciously kept me from fainting, amidst the snares, that were every day laid for me. Sometimes the officers would affect to reason with me, on the impropriety of my conduct: saying, I was ruining myself for ever, that it was evident, I laboured under an intellectual derangement, and should not only lose my character, but even my work itself. I replied, that with respect to my mind, I could assure them, it was not until of very late, that I was come to the right use of my reason, for which I had cause to bless the Lord; and concerning work, I knew assuredly that the Lord, who had already done so much for me, would amply recompense me, for any sacrafice I might make, rather than offend HIM.

My health was now considerably impaired, and I became exceedingly low in body through extreme abstinence: I had such an earnest desire of saving something towards paying off my former debts, that I did not allow myself the common necessaries of life; but my friends dissuaded me from such rash measures, and prevailed upon me to drink now and then half a pint of Beer, and, in a short time, my health and strength returned.

Before we removed from this place, my soul was much rejoiced, at the arrival of another regiment who came to relieve us, in which were many God-fearing men, who related unto me the following particulars. " About three years back," said they

" we had one or two men in the regiment, who feared God, and prayed night and day, that he would be graciously pleased to open the eyes of their fellow soldiers, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth, that they might be eternally saved; but for a long time it seemed as if their prayers were unanswered, and they saw no fruit of their labours. We had no preachers amongst us; but being quartered at Rye, some were persuaded to go to hear preaching there, when the word was made the power of God to the salvation of their souls, and a gracious reformation was begun in the regiment." I now saw the hand of God, in sending me over to Rye: the report of a soldier preaching, had induced them to come and hear, and notwithstanding my ignorance, the word reached the hearts of many, who told me they hoped to praise God to all eternity that ever he sent me to Rye. O Lord! How excellent is thy name in all the earth! Great, and marvellous are thy works altogether! And that my soul knoweth right well!

Several Classes were soon formed in the regiment, which I trust remain to this day.

The night previous to our leaving this place, as many of us as could be spared from duty, assembled together, when the Lord met with us in a powerful manner: many found Christ precious to their souls, three or four found peace with God, and truly " the shout of a king was heard in our camp." The inhabitants were grieved much at our departure, and

one of them told me, if I would consent to be discharged, he would advance the money, although it should oblige him to sell the bed he slept upon; but I durst not consent, as I considered myself at present in my own place. The Lord had full possession of my heart, I was perfectly happy in his favour, and I could truly say,

"Not a cloud did arise, to darken the skies,
"Or hide for a moment, the Lord from my eyes."

After having taken an affectionate leave of our religious acquaintance, both soldiers, and town's people, we marched off for Lewis, in the same county, where we halted the day following, being Sabbath day. After dinner I was retired to my chamber, and whilst at prayer, the following words were impressed upon my mind; "Go now, and I will be with thee." I believed it to be of God, and went, not knowing where. I had not gone far, before I met two men, and a boy who asked me, if I knew a man in our Regiment, who preached sometimes, and of whom people thought he was out of his right mind. I answered in the affirmative; they replied, "We should "be glad to see him, as we have heard much talk "concerning him, and there is a crouded congrega-"tion at our chapel, desiring to hear him preach." I said, "Perhaps he has been represented to you as "an able preacher, so of course, if you should hear "him, you will be disappointed; for I assure you

" he is not much polished." They answered, " We " shall like him never the worse for that: if God be " with him, that is enough!" I now made myself known to them, they prayed God to be with me, and we went down to the chapel, where the people were waiting. I spoke to them, as the Lord gave me utterance, and God was with us. They were Calvinists, and I clearly saw that even the people of God may differ in judgment, respecting many things, that are non-essential to salvation. O may I ever cultivate that charitable disposition towards those who differ from me in opinion, which the Gospel of our blessed Lord, so much recommends!

We removed from hence to Huckfield, where the Regiment separated, and I had not many religious friends. I had not been here many days, when an aged gentleman, on horseback, came to the Inn where I was quartered, and enquired for a person of the name of Pickering, I told him I was he, when he desired to speak with me in private; and when we were retired, he gave me to understand that, he lived about nine miles from that place, that his name was Howard, a schoolmaster and local Preacher, in the Methodist's society: he added, that having heard of my persecution for preaching the Gospel, he could not be happy until he had seen me. He entreated me not to fear what man could do unto me, praying that God might bless me, and my endeavours to spread the knowledge of his truth. I went out, and having collected some of my friends together, we retired

into the fields, where the Lord refreshed our hearts, and showered down his blessings upon us. Brother Howard invited me to come to his house as soon as possible; and although the officers had offered a reward to any, who should apprehend me with a Bible in my hands, and confined some of the society many days and nights, for having been found praying; yet, whenever I wanted a favour, the Lord always so ordered it that, in spite of the rest, some one or other granted it me: so that I had many opportunities of visiting them, during my stay in this place. We had many gracious seasons together, the Lord revived his work in the hearts of some, and I trust that my feeble labours were not in vain. May God ever bless that dear people for all their kindness to me!

We now removed to Horsham in the county of Sussex. Here I was much grieved, when the Regiment, which had been separated awhile, met again: some, who had once run well, for want of public means, and through the deceitfulness of sin, had been hindered. However, I got them together again, and although it was very cold, being the depth of winter, and we had no where to meet together in, except the open air; yet the Lord was again good and gracious unto us, and we had cause to bless him for all his mercies.

We had not been in this town many days, before we were joined by one of the Essex Regiments,

whom the Lord had been graciously visiting, through the instrumentality of the Methodist Preachers, who went to Darking, in Surry, where the Regiment had been laying, and "As iron sharpeneth iron, so does the countenance of a man his friends," for although we had never before seen each other; yet we soon became intimately acquainted, and oftentimes has my soul been blessed, whilst I stood, almost up to the knees in snow, preaching the Gospel of glad tidings to them; yet, blessed be God! I did not spend my strength in vain, for he owned my feeble endeavours, and souls were savingly converted to him.

But the time of my release was now fast drawing near, and whilst many were endeavouring to bring me to the halberts to see me punished, and my health, by often preaching in the open air, at this inclement season, much impaired, in a very unexpected way, one, who had not long before been a violent persecutor, granted me leave to come on furlough, to see my friends, which opened a way for my discharge. I came, and it was no little trial to me, to stand up to preach, in the place of my nativity, amongst my old neighbours, and companions in iniquity; but the Lord supported me. Some spoke well of me; others ill; but my work, and my judgment was with God. My kind friends of Wilmslow, and other places, solicited me to sue for my discharge, and when I rejoined the Regiment I did so; but now an objection arose with me, whether or no I was doing the will of God; however, after much prayer, and many con-

flicts, and my friends in the Regiment consenting to give me up, seeing nothing but punishment availed me if I stopped, I got my discharge on the 4th of March 1797, after having paid a most exorbitant sum for it, part of which my kind friends had sent me. And now I was upwards of 200 miles from home, and had sold many of my clothes to raise the sum, that had been so unreasonably demanded. After having travelled many miles, weary and fatigued, late at night, I reached the house of a friend, whom I had promised to call upon, the first opportunity. I told her my situation, and she said that she had been many days prevented from paying a sum of money which she had in the house, and that she could well spare whatever I wanted, she insisted on my taking a large sum; but I would only accept of half a guinea, and having to go to Rye my friends there, especially Mr. Haddock, now gone to his reward, insisted on my taking what money I thought sufficient to carry me home. At Rye, and Winchelsea I spent a few days, with comfort and satisfaction, amongst some religious soldiers, who were quartered there, I preached to them several times, and our souls were refreshed. I then proceeded on my journey, and soon reached home to the satisfaction of myself and friends; after having spent upwards of four years in a scene of riot and dissipation, surrounded with men, who, not having the fear of God before their eyes, regarded none of his precepts, nor listened to any of his counsels; yet

the God of all my mercies, whose name is GRACIOUS, snatched me as a brand from the burning, "Assured "my soul of her part in the Redeemer's blood," and made me happy in his favour.

But, were my trials now at end? No, far from it! My former extravagance had so brought me into debt, that nothing appeared to await me, but the galling chains of poverty, and worldly distress. My creditors came upon me on every hand, and many a time have I been sorely distressed to know which way to take; yet whenever I simply spread my wants before the Lord, he always delivered me; but alas! this was not always the case; for, to my shame I acknowledge it, I have not lived so near to God, since I came home, as I did before; yet, blessed be his holy name! He hath in some measure kept my feet in the good way, and I have enjoyed many happy seasons amongst my friends both in the Stockport, and Macclesfield circuits; it is true, I have had severe and fiery trials from various, and unexpected quarters; but God hath ever been the strength of my heart, and I trust he will continue to be my portion for ever.

If I have any wish unsatisfied, it is, that I may live to his glory, see his work prosper, and find my way to heaven: but it is only "through much tri-"bulation" I expect to "enter the kingdom," the beaten; but sure, path of the CROSS, will inevitably lead to the CROWN, and it is only by being a "follower of those who, through FAITH and PATIENCE, now inherit the promises" that I *wish* to

gain the haven of eternal repose, "the city of God "the great king." At present "for me to live is "Christ, and to die would be eternal gain:" for I have a hope, sure and stedfast, as an anchor cast within the vail, that, through the all-atoning blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, I shall one day join in singing the anthems of redeeming grace through the countless ages of immortality.

"Yes! I shall bear some humble part
"In that immortal song,
"Wonder and joy shall tune my heart,
"And love command my tongue."

READER, if in the perusal of the foregoing little Narrative, thou hast reaped as much pleasure as I have in writing it, I shall think myself abundantly rewarded for my trouble: how far divine Grace hath been exemplified, in mercifully sparing, abundantly pardoning, and graciously forgiving a wretch like myself I leave thee to judge; not that thou canst *best* tell how gracious and merciful the Lord hath been unto me: for as "every heart knows its "own bitterness," so every breast can best feel its own pleasures. Yet let me persuade thee, whoever thou art, to turn thine eyes inward: if thou art already a child of God, by sensible adoption and grace, then happy art thou; but if not, do not, at the hazard of thy soul, risque another moment,

" arise, shake thyself from the dust, and call upon " the name of the Lord," and he *will* hear, he *will* answer:

" Those arms of love that compass'd me
" Would all mankind embrace!"

Fly then to the city of refuge, " lay hold on the " horns of the altar," and find repose in Christ.

HYMN.

I.

AND can it be, that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caus'd his pain!
For me! who him to death pursued:
Amazing love! how can it be,
That thou, my God, should'st die for me?

II.

'Tis myst'ry all! th' immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine:
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore;
Let angel-minds inquire no more.

III.

He left his Father's throne above,
(So free, so infinite his grace!)
Empti'd himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

IV.

Long my imprison'd spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night:
Thine eye diffus'd a quickning ray;
I woke; the dungeon flam'd with light:
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and follow'd thee.

V.

No condemnation now I dread,
Jesus, and all in him, is mine:
Alive in him, my living head,
And cloathed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown through Christ my own.

HYMN.

I SEEK a place above,
Beyond terrestrial height;
A land of everlasting love,
And pure delight:
I am a stranger here;
This is not mine abode;
I'm trav'ling to a city there,
Prepar'd by God.

There great Jehovah reigns!
Th' august, almighty King;
And angels on those happy plains,
His glory sing.
He is their light and sun,
Pours beatific rays!
And brighter than celestial noon,
Reveals his grace.

While holy pleasures flow,
From pure æthereal springs,
The saints with bliss extatic glow,
Beneath his wings!
Or walk ambrosial fields,
Secure from baneful harms!
While Jesu's glorious presence yields
Unnumber'd charms!

I bid the world farewel,
And boldly urge my way;
Towards the joys ineffable
Of endless day:
Through hurricanes and seas
I still press forward on,
And strive, and agonize to seize
Th' immortal crown.

My foes pursue me sore,
And tempt my feet to rove;
Yet still I trust the mighty power,
Of heavenly love.
On Jesus I confide,
He's faithful to his word;
And doth, when by temptations tried,
His aid afford.

Or if my wand'ring feet,
Through nature's weakness stray,
Methinks I hear my Lord repeat,
"This is the way!
"The sacred, narrow road,
"That points to pleasures true,
"And leads directly to thy God,
"Only pursue."

By lively faith I see,
The bright, supernal gate;
And lo! a glorious company,
Of angels wait,

Inviting me to feast,
On their seraphic joys;
Hark! now they sing, "O come with haste,
"To paradise."

I come, ye happy choirs!
I pass the gloomy vale!
O Saviour! keep me from the powers
Of death and hell.
Let me thy foot-steps tread,
Nor ever from thee stray;
But be, by all thy mercies led,
To heav'nly day.

A DEO

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